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THEORIES OF THE NATURE AND STANDARD OF TASTE IN ENGLAND, 1700-1790

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

1934

By

ANDREW CANNON SMITH, S.J.

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CHAPTER IV

THE CRITERIOLOGY OF TASTE

A question which divided the literary theorists of the eighteenth century was that of the validity of the aesthetic judgment. Were the pronouncements of taste absolute, everywhere and at all times the same, or were they relative, varying according to external circumstances or with the character of the perceiving subject? The divergent answers to this question reveal a wide rift, which because it is by no means confined to the field of aesthetics, but extends through every department of thought, has been named, by a recent student of the history of ideas, the opposition between the "uniformitarian" and "diversitarian" conceptions of nature.[1] As limited to our subject, this antithesis cuts across all such questions as the objectivity of beauty, or the relative rôles of feeling and intellect in its appreciation. While the uniformitarian standard of taste went more naturally, and certainly more commonly, with an objective conception of beauty, it was yet possible, as Hume and Kames both illustrated before Kant, to join uniformity and subjectivity. Or again, while an intellectualist psychology of taste was all but synonymous with a uniform standard, sentiment too, as was plausibly argued by Hume and Rousseau, has a common basis in the nature of man as such; and, on the other hand, a complete pyrrhonist could hold a relative

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[1] A. O. Lovejoy, "Parallel of Deism and Classicism," Mod. Phil., XXIX (1932), 281-99, gives a good classification of the various forms in which this antithesis manifests itself.

standard of taste, whether he conceived the aesthetic judgment as a process of feeling or one of intellect.[2]

1. The Uniformitarian Standard of Taste

The difficulties inherent in the assertion of a fixed standard of taste were too obvious not to be admitted even by many of the most uniformitarian critics. The peculiarly personal nature of the aesthetic reaction had been early recognized by the coining of the phrase, the je-ne-sais-quoi; and though that phrase fell into ever greater disrepute as the philosophers proceeded to trace the beautiful to its elusive source, another maxim equally honorable for its antiquity rose to plague the champions of judicial criticism: "There is no disputing about tastes." The critics were far from silenced by this despairing cry of the pyrrhonists in aesthetics; they found several ways of so distinguishing the ambiguous word taste as to strain out the hopelessly changeable elements from the universal substratum on which they based the philosophy of art, and they indicated accordingly a sense in which it was possible, in spite of the partial truth of the maxim, to have a fruitful dispute about good taste and bad taste.[3] But though not silenced, the critics were impressed. Few are the writers who do not begin their quest for a standard of taste by avowing the special difficulty of the task. Brumoy, for instance,

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[2]D. Mornet, Le romantisme en France au XVIII[e] siècle (Paris, 1912), pp. 179-80: "Les uns eurent des indulgences pour le sentiment: d'autres penchèrent pour la raison. Mais l'équilibre heureux des antithèses mena aux mêmes conclusions:

De l'immuable beau les brillantes idées
Sont dans un grand palais soigneusement gardées.

C'est Perrault qui le dit, et dans ce palais presque tous les critiques sont venus faire leur cour ... "

[3]Discussion of these distinctions is reserved for the third section of this chapter.

found taste peculiarly eccentric in its judgments on literature. "Is not taste, then, which ought to be the sovereign judge, . . . always the same? Undoubtedly it is: but taste in painting and sculpture, being guided by the eyes proceeds with more certainty but with more timidity in matters of writing."[4] Without recognizing any such peculiar distinction among the arts, many other writers remarked in taste a greater latitude of variation than belongs to the faculty perceptive of abstract truth. The criterion, though there is one, is more difficult to define. Nathaniel Lancaster made the characters of his dialogue affirm it:

> To admit for the present, said Sophronius, that all these Ideas are justly comprehended under the Word Delicacy . . . . Yet by what Criterion is this Property in any Subject to be tried? In that operation of the Faculty, which we call Reasoning, the Mind examines the Objects, as they stand in Reality; and for our Direction there is always a Standard in the Nature of Things. But is this the case with regard to what Connoisseurs call Amiable or Delicate? Beauty and Pleasure are nothing but an agreement between the Object and the Faculty. What then can determine Man's Approbation or Dislike in these points but the peculiar Cast of his Mind?
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> Though it should not be possible, answered Philocles, precisely to fix the Criterion you are enquiring after, yet would it not necessarily follow that there is absolutely no such thing.[5]

Edmund Burke, while he admits this difference between logic and taste in the matter of a clear criterion, rather deplores it as the sad result of neglect. "If taste has not been as happily cultivated," he says, referring by the comparison to logic, "it was not that the subject was barren, but that the labourers were few or negligent: for to say the truth, there are not the same interesting motives to impel us to fix the one, which urge us to ascertain the other."[6] Lord Kames, for his part, is optimistic enough

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[4]The Greek Theatre, trans. Charlotte Lennox (3 vols.; London, 1759), p. lxxv.

[5]Plan of an Essay on Delicacy (1748), in R. Dodsley, Fugitive Pieces (London, 1762), I, 312-13. See also J. Marmontel, Eléments de littérature (Paris, 1846), I, 20.

[6]"On Taste," Works (Bohn ed.; London, 1893), I, 53.

to discover a providential design in the comparative obscurity of the standard of taste: "were it more clear and authoritative, it would banish all difference of taste: a refined taste would not form a character, nor be intitled to esteem."[7]

It was with full consciousness, then, of these difficulties, all stemming from the easily observable differences of taste in actual practice, that when the "standard of taste" began to be formally discussed towards the middle of the century, the best known writers proclaimed their belief in some fundamental uniform criterion. Hume in the essay which he wrote with this subject and title, opposed to the "No disputing" proverb another species of common sense:

> Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between Ogilby and Milton, or Bunyan and Addison would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a molehill to be as high as Teneriffe, or a pond as extensive as the ocean.[8]

Burke is still more clear in his announced determination to stand firm for uniformity.

> On a superficial view we may seem to differ very widely from each other in our reasonings, and no less in our pleasures; but notwithstanding this difference, which I think to be rather apparent than real, it is probable that the standard both of reason and taste is the same in all human creatures. For if there were not some principles of judgments as well as of sentiment common to all mankind, no hold could possibly be taken either on their reason or their passions, sufficient to maintain the ordinary correspondence of life.[9]

As the terms sufficiently indicate, this writer did not feel that he was hazarding some novel or merely probable view. Quite the contrary, as he well knew, he was re-stating in the

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[7] Elements of Criticism (3 vols.; Edinburgh, 1762), III, 368.

[8] "Of the Standard of Taste," Essays, Moral, Political and Literary, ed. T. H. Greene and T. H. Grose (2 vols.; London, 1875), I, 269.

[9] "On Taste," Works, I, 52.

face of new opposition what had hitherto been an axiom in all aesthetic discussion. Thus Shaftesbury, as early as 1709, had made it the premise of his argument for a moral sense whose judgments are objectively valid.

> Could we once convince ourselves of what is in itself so evident, "That in the very nature of things there must of necessity be the foundation of a right and wrong taste, as well in respect of inward characters and features as of outward person, behaviour and action," we should be far more ashamed of ignorance and wrong judgment in the former than in the latter of these subjects. Even in the Arts, which are mere imitations of that outward grace and beauty, we not only confess a taste, but make it a part of refined breeding to discover amidst the many false manners and ill styles the true and natural one, which represents the real beauty and Venus of the kind.[10]

About the same time the advocates of the moderns in their quarrel with the Ancients invoked the same principle in their plea for equal treatment in criticism. Houdard de La Motte in this spirit recalled to Madame Dacier that the whole quarrel hinged on weighing both parties with the same scales.

> La question n'est pas, comme bien des gens se l'imaginent, & comme les Partisans outrés de l'Antiquité semblent l'entendre, s'il faut mépriser ou estimer les Anciens; ... il s'agit seulement de sçavoir s'il ne les faut peser au même poids que les Modernes: Si, quand les idées du beau dans tous les genres sont une fois connuës, il ne faut pas mesurer tout indistinctement à cette régle, & éffacer des ouvrages, pour ainsi dire, le nom de leurs Auterus pour ne les juger qu'en eux-mêmes.[11]

In England the axiom served the more rigidly rationalistic critics as an answer to the plea for variety in drama, corresponding to the different customs of various ages and countries. Charles Gildon lets Mrs. Laudon voice Farquhar's argument that "London and Athens are quite different Places," only to have Morisina

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[10] Advice to an Author, in Characteristics of Men, Manners and Times, ed. J. M. Robertson (2 vols.; New York, 1900), I, 216-17.

[11] Réflexions sur la critique (1715), in Oeuvres (Paris, 1754), III, 16.

refute her with the example of Shakespeare and "those Masters of Poetry among the Antients of Rome and Athens, who have in all Times, and Nations . . . . kept up, nay encreased their Esteem and Value, whilst every thing else chang'd."[12]

The uniform criterion, which in the early part of the century was thought almost too axiomatic for defence, began in the 1730's under the growing insistence on actual variations in art and taste, to be restricted to a minimum of general truths, underlying all accidental changes. Among the various kinds of taste which Père André carefully discriminated in 1741 was what he called "le goût générale, fondé sur l'essence même de l'esprit humain, gravé dans tous les coeurs non par une institution arbitrarie, mais par la necessité de la Nature."[13] Some of the principles constituting this general taste were enumerated by William Melmoth in 1748:

> And perhaps the principles of criticism are as certain and indisputable, even as those of mathematics. Thus, for instance, that order is preferable to confusion, that harmony is more pleasing than dissonance, with some few other axioms upon which the science is built; are truths which strike at once upon the mind with the same sort of conviction, as that the whole is greater than any of its parts, ...[14]

The unchanging nature of these central principles is also asserted by Hume, who finds that taste in this respect compared quite favorably with philosophy. "Aristotle and Plato, and Epicurus and Descartes, may successively yield to each other: But Terence and Virgil maintain an universal, undisputed empire over the minds of men."[15] This optimism is echoed by Edmund Burke who further

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[12] Complete Art of Poetry (2 vols.; London, 1718), I, 106-7.

[13] Essai sur le beau, ed. H. Formey (Amsterdam, 1759), p. 81.

[14] Fitzosborne Letters (4th ed.; London, 1754), p. 183.

[15] "Of the Standard of Taste," Essays Moral, Political and Literary, I, 280.

affirms that the very existence of criticism is dependent upon the acceptance of a fixed standard:

> . . . . if taste has no fixed principles, if the imagination is not affected according to some invariable and certain laws, our labour is likely to be employed to very little purpose; as it must be judged a useless, if not an absurd undertaking to lay down rules for caprice, and to set up for a legislator of whims and fancies.[16]

But it is needless to multiply texts in this strain. The eighteenth-century critics were nothing if not judicial. Burke and Hume were merely stating with greater or less emphasis the aesthetic creed professed by most of the contemporary arbiters of taste, whether they committed their judgment to the general public in the form of critical reviews, or formulated them in text-books for the rising generation. A fixed standard, more or less intelligible to all, was the point of departure for evaluating literature and art quite as well as it was for religion and morals.[17] It was all a corollary of man's uniform nature.

Uniform human nature, the basis of uniform taste

The "Law of Nature" occupied too prominent a place in the thought and language of this period not to project itself into discussions about criticism. As in the religious controversies it was the common ground upon which the deists and the orthodox

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[16]"On Taste," Works, I, 53.

[17]Cf. Kames, Elements, III, 358: "The confiction of a common nature or standard . . . . is the foundation of morality. . . . . It accounts not less clearly for the conception we have of a right and wrong taste in the fine arts"; J. Reynolds, "Seventh Discourse," in Fifteen Discourses Delivered in the Royal Academy ("Everyman's Library" ed.; London, 1906), p. 106: "We will take it for granted that reason is something invariable and fixed in the nature of things; and . . . . we will conclude, that whatever goes under the name of taste, which we can fairly bring under the dominion of reason, must be considered as equally exempt from change." Cf. also, J. Beattie, Dissertations Moral and Critical (2 vols.; Dublin, 1783), I, 233; Marmontel, Eléments de littérature, I, 3.

rationalists could meet, so it was also a rallying point in the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. In this connection, it is at least an interesting coincidence that when Gildon had turned from the publication of deistic tracts to the relatively peaceful task of criticism, he defended the Aristotelian rules by calling them "not Human Laws, but the Laws of Nature." In the course of a long quotation from Dacier he includes this:

> For good Sense and right Reason, is of all Countries and Places; the same Subjects, which caus'd so many Tears to be shed in the Roman Theatre produce the same Effect on ours; and those Things that then gave Distaste do the same now. From whence I am convinc'd that never any Laws had such Force and Authority. Human Laws expire, or change very often after the Death of those, who enacted them, because Circumstances change, and the Interests of whom they are made to serve are different; but these still gain new Vigour, because they are the Laws of Nature, which always acts with Uniformity, renews them incessantly, and gives them a perpetuate Existence.[18]

Against this belief in nature's rules, Farquhar's appeal to the varied manners of Athens and London was useless. "To make that argument of any validity," Gildon remarked in a work published in 1721, but written some years earlier, "he should have prov'd that human nature and reason in London was not human nature and reason in Athens."[19]

The same assumption of the essential uniformity of "nature," whether that elastic term stood for the materials of art or for the ideal appreciative faculty of man, was implicit in all the defence of the rules as "nature methodised." In the Preface to his Poetical Works in 1717, Pope stated the axiom in

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[18] Complete Art of Poetry, I, 135. The same passage with a few verbal differences is to be found in Aristotle's Art of Poetry (London, 1705), Preface by Dacier, Sig. A. 4, verso.

[19] Laws of Poetry (London, 1721), p. 12. This work though published so much later had been sent to Lord Granville "long before." Cf. P. Dottin, Robinson Crusoe, Examin'd and Criticis'd (London and Paris, 1923), p. 40.

another form: "to say truth, whatever is very good sense must have been common sense in all times; and what we call learning, is but the knowledge of the sense of our predecessors."[20] Into this category of unchanging verities, "the Law of Nature" and "Human Nature" with Gildon, "common sense" with Pope, taste is introduced by Père Brumoy when he vindicates the perennial validity of Greek taste.

> . . . . there would be no longer any fixed rule, if taste and reason . . . . were variable according to places, times, and persons: if what pleased some might as justly displease others, and if all things were arbitrary in point of style, thoughts, turns, and works of wit: for it must follow, that each person yielding to his own manner of judging and thinking, must think and judge right, always guided by contrary ideas, and by very opposite sentiments. But things go not on in that manner, and whatever can be alledged, truth and beauty are one. They ought therefore to make the same impressions upon all understandings which have not been spoiled by science. . . . . Every fine and true thought, every sentiment that passes for sublime in one country, and in one age, are the same throughout every country and all times.[21]

In illustration of a "sentiment that passes for sublime . . . . throughout every country and all times," this critic goes on to cite Corneille's famous "qu'il mourut"--a phrase equally beloved of intellectualist and sentimental critics.[22] Agreement on this example is more than mere coincidence, since the uniformity assumed by its general approbation extends not only to reason but to every power and faculty of man. A few instances of this non-intellectualist uniformitarianism must now be given.

Edmund Burke was among the most eloquent of those who developed with considerable detail the specific identity of sense

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[20] Works of Alexander Pope, ed. Elwin-Courthope (London, 1871-1889), I, 9.

[21] The Greek Theatre, I, v-vi.

[22] Diderot, Recherches philosophiques sur l'origine et la nature du beau (1751), in Oeuvres (Paris, 1876), X, 30, gives what is probably the most detailed exposition of the sublimity of this much quoted sentence.

reactions in different individuals of the race. "We are satisfied," he declares, "that what appears light to one eye appears light to another; that what is dark and bitter to this man is likewise dark and bitter to that, and we conclude in the same manner of great and little, hard and soft, hot and cold, rough and smooth, and indeed of all the natural qualities and affections of bodies."[23] But long before Burke strung together his analogies to support the doctrine of a uniform aesthetic reaction, the Abbé Du Bos had leaped to the same conclusion by stating as an axiom the essential similarity of all men, "par le coeur."

> La réputation d'un poëme s'établit par le plaisir qu'il fait à tous ceux qui le lisent. Elle s'établit par voie de sentiment. ... On est même bien fondé à soutenir que les generations à venir seront touchées en lisant un poème qui a touché toutes les generations passées qui ont pu le lire en sa propre langue. Il n'entre qu'une supposition dans ce raisonnement, c'est que les hommes de tous les tems & de tous les pais sont semblables par le coeur.[24]

Batteux transmitted the axiom to his larger public: "Tous les hommes sont presque à l'unisson du côté du coeur."[25] Thus early had the principle later invoked by Rousseau as the best guide to religious truth,[26] received application in literary criticism. By the time of Johnson, "the uniformity of human sentiment" had become an accepted principle for the neglect of which the metaphysical poets were especially taken to task.[27]

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[23]Works, I, 54-55.

[24]Réflexions critiques sur la poësie et sur la peinture (3 vols.; 4th ed.; Paris, 1740), II, 492-93.

[25]Les beaux arts reduits à un même principe (1746), in Principes de la littérature (nouv. ed.; Lyon, 1802), I, 61.

[26]La Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard, ed. P. Masson (Paris, 1914), p. 309.

[27]Lives of the English Poets, ed. G. B. Hill (3 vols.; Oxford, 1905), I, 20.

The classics, a uniform criterion of taste

The unfailing appeal which the ancient classics were commonly conceded to have for readers of all ages and nations was in itself a conclusion from the axiom of a uniform standard of taste. The boast of Horace, "Exegi monumentum aere perennius," was accepted as its face value by the generations which both relished Horace as a poet and followed him as a critic.[28] It was inevitable, then, that when with the growing self-consciousness of literary criticism, a convenient touchstone for a good taste was sought, the classics should be immediately suggested. In the earlier enunciations of the suggestion there is not lacking a certain authoritarian bias. Bellegarde is a good instance when he pleads for the arbitration of quarrels over taste, by the judgment of the "most approv'd Authors."

> When we dispute of Tastes, and cannot agree, instead of every one maintaining his own with Obstinacy, we ought to take the Method we use for clearing doubts about Words and Language. We ought to have recourse to an Arbitrator, and submit it to the Judgment of the most approv'd Authors, as we rely on the best Tastes for the quality of Wine.[29]

Others, particularly the champions of the Ancients, are much more forthright in identifying taste and the classics of Greece and Rome. For Dacier, it is foolish to talk of two good tastes: "Il n'y en a qu'un, et c'est celui de l'antique."[30] Gildon likewise denies that there was any great art anywhere before the classics were known, and he attributes the earlier flowering of the

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[28]Cf. Caroline M. Goad, Horace in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century (New Haven, 1918), passim.

[29]Letters . . . . to a Lady of the Court of France . . . . (London, 1705), p. 36.

[30]Oeuvres d'Horace (Amsterdam, 1735), p. 70, cited by H. G. Paul, John Dennis: His Life and Criticism (New York, 1911), p. 116.

Renaissance in Italy to the commentaries on Aristotle that appeared earlier there than elsewhere.[31] For another writer, Hildebrand Jacob, the imitation of antiquity is the indispensable condition for a reproduction in modern times of "that Majesty, that Truth . . . . and natural Grace, so peculiar to the Ancients."[32] It is because Addison observed this condition and fashioned himself by the ancient models that he was enabled in the judgment of his disciple and editor, Thomas Tickell, to bring about in English "a great demand for correctness."[33] A glimpse of Addison's own theory in using the ancients in his chosen task of refining the popular taste may be had from a significant passage in the Spectator. In it one cannot fail to note how the authoritarian character of the appeal of the classics blended imperceptibly with the uniformitarian doctrine. The individual, under penalty of eccentricity, which is bad taste, must feel delight in works that have stood the test of so many different ages and countries.

> If a man would know whether he is possessed of this faculty, I would have him read over the celebrated works of antiquity, which have stood the test of so many different ages and countries; or those works among the moderns which have the sanction of the politer part of our contemporaries. If upon the perusal of such writings, he does not find himself delighted in an extraordinary manner, or if upon reading the admired passages in such authors, he finds a coldness and indifference in his thoughts, he ought to conclude not (as is too usual among tasteless readers) that the author wants those perfections which have been admired in him, but that he himself wants the faculty of discerning them.[34]

Before Addison approached the problem, Roger de Piles, to justify the achievements of the Ancients in the plastic arts, had alleged their perennial popularity. After reporting the aesthetic

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[31] Laws of Poetry, p. 53.

[32] "Of the Sister Arts," Works (London, 1735), p. 412.

[33] Preface to Addison's Works, ed. T. Tickell (London, 1721), p. vi.

[34] Spectator, No. 409, June 19, 1712.

scepticism of those who say that "beauty is nothing real; every one judges of it according to his own taste," the painter begs leave to dissent: "Be it as it will, people are very little divided in their sentiments about the beauty of the Antique. Men of understanding and lovers of the fine arts, have always had a value for these incomparable works."[35]

Thus the principle upon which De Piles in 1708, and Addison in 1712, based an esteem for the antique masterpieces, was authoritarian in the sense that it discounted the vagaries of individual reader or beholder, and inculcated deference in matters critical to an external authority. But this authority, because it was manifested by the concurring voice of "men of understanding" of different ages and countries, corresponded in reality to the dictates of the corporate reason of the human race. By the middle of the century this rationalization of the traditional regard for the classics had become an accomplished fact. One writer who recognizes this in all its implications is William Melmoth:

> . . . . the deference paid to the performances of the great masters of antiquity is fixed upon just and solid reasons: it is not because Aristotle and Horace have given us the rules of criticism, that we submit to their authority; it is because these rules are derived from works which have been distinguished by the uninterrupted admiration of all the more improved part of mankind from their earliest appearance down to the present hour. For whatever, through a long series of ages, has been universally esteemed as beautiful, cannot but be conformable to our just and natural ideas of beauty.[36]

Hume, writing about a decade later, on the standard of taste, can discover no fixed criterion more evident and more practical than this same "uninterrupted admiration." Beginning with the ancients, much in the manner of Gildon, he goes on to extend the

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[35]Principles of Painting (Eng. transl.; London, 1743), p. 84.

[36]Fitzosborne Letters, p. 185.

same criterion likewise to the moderns.

> The same Homer, who pleased at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and London. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not been able to obscure his glory. Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator; but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours. On the contrary, a real genius, the longer his works endure, and the more wide they are spread, the more sincere is the admiration which he meets with.[37]

A practical criterion--common consent

If human nature was always and everywhere essentially the same, it was inevitable that the classics, once established as aesthetically pleasing representations of nature, should in all times and all places retain their hold on men's minds. They could therefore very well serve, as Addison suggested they should, as tests for the presence in any given individual of a sane aesthetic reaction, or a good taste. But the same criterion which determined their excellence and that of the minds which admired them, could also be extended to the works of the day. The canon of the classics was not closed. If the ancient writings were rightly esteemed just because they were universally acclaimed, then that same universal acclamation might canonize the productions of the moderns. The unity of human nature was the psychological assumption underlying the uniform standard; common consent was the practical formula of its application.

This conclusion, like the preferred status of the classics, emerged most clearly from the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. Against the appeal to individual reason which was stressed by Moderns like Houdard de La Motte,[38] Ancients like Madame Dacier

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[37]"Of the Standard of Taste," Essays, Moral, etc., p. 271.

[38]Réflexions sur la critique (1715), in Oeuvres, III, 94-95.

asserted the higher authority of universal reason, second in certitude only to the Divine law.

> ... quand une fois une opinion a esté authorisée par le consentement de tous les hommes, ou de la plus grande et de la plus saine partie des hommes, des sages y soummetent leur raison. ... Pourquoi cela? C'est que pour opposer à une decision revestue de cette grande authorité, il faudroit qu'un homme fut assuré que sa raison seule seroit supérieure à celle de tous les autres hommes. ... Il doit donc renoncer à sa raison? Non sans doute. Il doit s'en servier. Sa raison doit présider au jugement de toutes les opinions humaines, & c'est l'usage mesme qu'il en fait si elle n'est pas entièrement aveugle. ... En un mot il n'y a qu'une Loi Divine qui soit plus forte que celle que forme le consentement de tous les hommes & de tous les temps.[39]

Madame Dacier is confirmed in this view by the precedent of Longinus, whose practical test for the sublime, she thus translates: "Figurez vous qu'une chose est veritablement sublime quand vous voyes qu'elle plaist toujours, en tout temps, à toute sorte des personnes."[40] It is not surprising, then, that she identifies a proper deference for the common consent in matters of criticism with the possession of a good taste. If it is Scaliger's misfortune to exemplify in himself "a very depraved taste," he owes it entirely to his exaggerated individualism: "Il faut avouer que la nature luy a donné une heureuse aptitude à se revolter contre les opinions les plus générales & les plus receües."[41]

With Madame Dacier and her partisans the common consent was a valuable index to truth because it crystallized the findings of many individual intellects. But the same norm was equally acceptable to critics for whom taste was more a process of feeling

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[39] Causes de la corruption du goust (Paris, 1714), pp. 53-55. Cf. ibid., p. 48, where the author quotes to the same effect from her earlier Preface to the Iliad.

[40] Ibid. The quotation is from "On the Sublime," chap. v.

[41] Ibid., p. 325. Perrault had previously blamed Scaliger for the same fault. Cf. Parallèle des anciens et des modernes (2d ed.; Paris, 1692), I, 39.

than of deductive reasoning. Thus the Abbé Du Bos is particularly emphatic in exalting the testimony of the general feeling; he compares its rôle in aesthetics to that of a demonstration in geometry.

> Enfin dans les choses qui sont du ressort du sentiment, comme le mérite d'un poëme, l'émotion de tous les hommes qui l'ont lû et qui le lisent, & leur vénération pour l'ouvrages, sont ce qu'est une démonstration en Géometrie. Or c'est sur la foi de cette démonstration que les peuples se sont entêtez de Vergile et de quelques autres Poëtes. Ainsi les hommes ne changeront point d'opinion sur ce point-là que les ressorts de la machine humaine ne soient changez.[42]

Hutcheson, reversing the process of the argument, proves the existence of a sense of beauty by the fact that "all men are better pleased with Uniformity . . . . than the contrary . . . . ."[43] Berkeley, seeking some "rational notion of the je-ne-sais-quoi in Beauty," fixes upon the pleasure which the masterpieces of Grecian architecture have always given. "What think you, Alciphron, can the appearance of a thing please at this time, and in this place, which pleased two thousand Years ago, and two thousand Miles off, without some real principle of Beauty?"[44]

Among more strictly literary critics, Samuel Johnson, like Pope before him,[45] set great store by the unprejudiced reactions of the "impartial reader," "the common voice of the multitude uninstructed by precept, and unprejudiced by authority, which in questions that relate to the heart of man, is . . . . more decisive than the learning of Lipsius."[46] Hume, in the same spirit,

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[42]Réflexions, II, 505; cf. also ibid., pp. 493-96, 515.

[43]Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (London, 1725), p. 68.

[44]Alciphron, Dialogue III, s. ix (London, 1732), I, 181-82.

[45]The Iliad of Homer (1715), b. XV, v. 298; ed. G. Wakefield (London, 1806), IV, 32.

[46]Rambler, No. 52, Sept. 15, 1570. Cf. also Lives of the English Poets, III, 441; and J. Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill (Oxford, 1887), II, 238; III, 226, 247-48.

justified the rules on an empirical basis: "Their foundation is the same with that of all the practical sciences, experience; nor are they anything but general observations concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages."[47] But perhaps the most formal and comprehensive statement of the philosophy and practice of this uniform standard of taste is the conclusion to which Lord Kames brought his chapter on this subject:

> If after all this is said, the standard of taste be thought not yet sufficiently ascertained, there is still one resource in which I put great confidence. What I have in view, are the principles that constitute the sensitive part of our nature. By means of these principles, common to all men, a wonderful uniformity is preserved among the emotions and feelings of different individuals; the same object working upon every person the same impression; the same in kind, at least, if not in degree. There have been aberrations, as above observed, from these principles; but soon or late they always prevail, by restoring the wanderers to the right track. The uniformity of taste here accounted for, is the very thing that in other words is termed the common sense of mankind.[48]

Earlier in the same chapter, in the course of a digression against Perrault, Kames had summed up the principle of aesthetic universality in one sentence, "If a thing be universal, it must be natural."[49] The statement might have served Sir Joshua Reynolds as a device for his Discourses, so often in developing them did he identify universality with beauty, good taste with common opinion. But he was able to coin similar aphorisms for himself: "What has pleased, and continues to please, is likely to please again."[50] "How can that be the nature of man, in which no two individuals are the same?"[51] Percival Stockdale finds no more convincing way of indicating the justice of his own taste for Rousseau and Pope

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[47] "Of the Standard of Taste," in Essays Moral, etc., I, 269.

[48] Elements of Criticism, III, 373.

[49] Ibid., p. 335.

[50] "Seventh Discourse," in Fifteen Discourses, p. 117.

[51] Ibid., p. 107.

against that of Gray for Ossian than the united suffrages of mankind.

> The bottom of Lethe, to which Fingal is now consigned; the universal and eager attention which is given to the writings of Rousseau; the applause of Europe; and his established fame, are the sacred and unanswerable vouchers for my admiration of that original, and capital genius. The same universal, and intimate acquaintance with the works of Pope; the same universal applause; the same fixed and immortal fame, are the respectable and incontrovertible warrants for my defence, for my idolatry of that great poet. These vouchers, whose united suffrage are the voice of nature, the most passionate worshipers of Mr. Gray's memory will be presumptuous, if they contradict.[52]

This unquestioning reverence for the uniform standard as embodied in the common consent was assured of a lasting influence over the succeeding generations when Doctor Blair inculcated it in his Edinburgh lectures on rhetoric. The praise which he gave it as the only feasible substitute for the authority of an ideal individual critic is curiously suggestive of the political theory of democracy. The ideal critic is as undiscoverable as the ideal king: the voice of the many therefore must be taken as the voice of nature, and hence of reason.

> Now, were there any person who possessed in full perfection all the powers of human nature, whose internal senses were in every instance exquisite and just, and whose reason was unerring and sure, the determinations of such a person concerning beauty, would, beyond doubt, be a perfect standard for the Taste of all others. . . . . But as there is no such living standard, no one person to whom all mankind will allow such submission to be due, what is there of sufficient authority to be the standard of the various and opposite Tastes of men? Most certainly there is nothing but the Taste, as far as it can be gathered, of human nature. That which men concur the most in admiring, must be held to be beautiful. His taste must be esteemed just and true, which coincides with the general sentiments of men. In this standard we must rest. To the sense of mankind, the ultimate appeal must ever lie, in all works of Taste.[53]

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[52] An Inquiry into the Nature and Genuine Laws of Poetry (London, 1778), pp. 93-94.

[53] Lecture II, "On Taste," in Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres (2 vols.; London, 1783), I, 30. This passage with slight verbal differences appeared in an article in the Lady's Magazine, XIV (1783), 349-50.

But Blair must not be conceived as a complete democrat in his idealization of the common opinion. In spite of the admiration which he professed for primitive poets like Ossian, he required of the critics whose judgments he weighed a certain amount of education. In this way he limits considerably the notion of common consent.

> When we refer to the concurring sentiments of men as the ultimate test of what is to be accounted beautiful in the arts, this is to be always understood of men placed in such situations as are favorable to the proper exertions of Taste. . . . . We refer to the sentiments of mankind in polished and flourishing nations; where arts are cultivated and manners refined; where works of genius are subjected to free discussion, and Taste is improved by science and philosophy.[54]

Common consent understood in a limited sense

In thus making education a qualification for suffrage in matters of taste, Blair was not merely defending his own profession of teacher. He was perpetuating a tradition which had held its ground continuously through the century. It had been an axiom of the French classical period that the public which the writer addressed was limited to people of "good sense."[55] While in the meantime occasional critics with primitivistic bias had glorified the powers of discernment unspoiled by the prejudices of education, or, more moderately, suggested some regard for the common likings as a supplement for the judgments of the learned, so that what pleased both alike was "infallibly very Good and Beautiful,"[56] yet the older view had never been lost sight of either in France or England. It even affected the Abbé Du Bos to the extent of making him forget all the fine things previously said about

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[54]Blair, I, 32-33.

[55]Cf. R. Bray, La formation de la doctrine classique en France (Paris, 1927), pp. 132-36.

[56]Aristotle's Art of Poetry, p. 228.

"sentiment," when he came to choose his jury of taste.

> Je ne comprens point le bas peuple dans le public capable de prononcer sur les poëmes ou sur les tableaux, comme de décider à quel dégré ils sont excéllens. Le mot de public ne renferme ici que les personnes qui ont acquis des lumieres, soit par la lecture, soit par le commerce du monde. ... Le public dont il s'agit ici est donc borné aux personnes qui lisent, qui connoissent les spectacles, qui voient & qui entendent parler de tableaux, ou qui ont acquis de quelque manière que ce soit, ce discernement qu'on appele goût de comparaison, ... [57]

On this point, Du Bos for once is in perfect accord with the greater number of his compatriots. Trublet is all for weighing votes, not counting them;[58] Dalembert remarks that the greatest literary beauties are addressed to a select few;[59] Formey distinguishes "le public passager" from "le public impérissable," from whom alone he expects a final vertict;[60] Condillac[61] and Marmontel[62] express the same sentiment. English critics are equally exacting in their demands. Hume, Priestley, and Blair are three who agree on limiting the public whose common consent they make the uniform criterion of taste.[63] Kames is so formally explicit on the point that his words may be cited for the crowd.

> In gathering the common sense of mankind upon morals, we may safely consult every individual. But with respect to the fine arts, our method must be different: a wary choice is necessary; for to collect votes indifferently will certainly mislead us: those who depend for food on bodily labour, are totally void of taste; of such a taste, at least as can be of use in the fine arts. This consideration bars the greater part of mankind; and of the remaining part, many have their

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[57] Réflexions, II, 334-35.

[58] Essais sur divers sujets ... (4 vols.; Amsterdam, 1755-60), II, 90.

[59] Encyclopédie, art. "Goût," t. VII (1757), 768.

[60] Essai sur le beau, p. 185.

[61] Cours d'études pour l'instruction du Prince de Parme (Paris, 1782), II, 335.

[62] Eléments de littérature, I, 43.

[63] Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," Essays Moral, etc., I, 275; J. Priestley, A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism (London, 1777), p. 135; Blair, Lectures, I, 32.

> taste corrupted to such a degree as to unqualify them al - gether for voting. The common sense of mankind must ther be confined to the few that fall not under these exceptions.[64]

The way in which Kames thus gravitated back to the same criterion which had guided the critics of France when "good sense" rather than "taste" was the accredited arbiter of values in art, is a clear indication of the persistence of the uniformitarian temper in the face of all attacks. Writing after the rival psychologies of taste had been pretty thoroughly discussed, well acquainted with the writings of the aesthetic relativists, sympathizing with them, even if inconsistently, in their subjective conception of beauty, Kames, in this like Hume, was yet unwilling to deny the existence of a uniform critical standard, and unable to find any more serviceable than the consent of qualified critics.[65]

ii. The Diversitarian Standard of Taste

In spite of the number and importance of its defenders, the doctrine of a uniform standard of taste did not lack opposition. The excesses of over-formal critics who failed to discriminate among the "rules," or who applied them mechanically to all the productions of the age, provoked a natural reaction. Moreover the "no-disputing" axiom, with its perennial attraction for the pyrrhonistic leanings latent in every age, found new confirmation as the eighteenth century increased its knowledge of the beliefs

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[64] *Elements of Criticism*, III, 369.

[65] It is on this account that B. Croce, *Aesthetic as Science of Expression . . . .*, transl. D. Ainslie (London, 1909), p. 366, cites Kames as a good example "of the piteous perplexity of thought" exhibited by eighteenth century writers on aesthetics. But it may be said in favor of Kames and the many like him that their perplexity was the result of a willingness to recognize contradictory phenomena regardless of their systematic asymmetry.

and customs of different nations and ages. Montesquieu and Voltaire are the great names usually associated with the introduction of the notion of the relative into criticism;[66] but of course they were neither the first nor the only critics who made much of the actual variations in men's critical judgments. One of the earlier of the relativists in our period was Bernard Mandeville. His importance in this respect was attested by James Usher as late as 1769:

> Of all those whom I have to contend with, Mandeville, the author of the Fable of the Bees, makes the closest attack upon intrinsic beauty, and seems to deny with the greatest plausibility, that there are things possessed of such real worth and excellence, as to be universally esteemed in all countries and ages. As the succeeding writers on his side of the question do little more than copy his objections on this head, I will consider them expressly, and answer at once to the crowd.[67]

The arguments to which Usher refers are simply accumulated instances of the great differences in individual tastes and humours, since "There are Parties among Connoisseurs, and few of them agree in their Esteem as to Ages and Countries."[68] With Mandeville, of course, relativism in taste is only a part of the universal pyrrhonism which inspired his whole work. But people who were far from being sceptics about all truths of a speculative order also showed occasionally a willingness to question the uniformitarian dogma in the special region of taste. The word itself gave some encouragement to such a view, as appears from a writer in the periodical, Common Sense:

> I take Taste (when not used for the Sensation of the Palate, which is its proper Signification) to be a Metaphor to express that Judgment each Man forms to himself of those Things, which are not contain'd in any certain Rules, and which admit

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[66] Cf. P. Van Tieghem, Le préromantisme (Paris, 1924), p. 26.

[67] Clio: or a Discourse on Taste (2d ed.; London, 1769), p. 17.

[68] Fable of the Bees, ed. F. B. Kaye (Oxford, 1924), I, 326.

> of no Demonstration; . . . . hence arises the Propriety of the Metaphor, because Taste in every thing is undetermined and Personal, as in the Palate, and all other Senses; nay even our Minds are as differently affected as our Palates, by the same Thing, when those Things are not of a Nature to be ascertained and demonstrated.[69]

It was in this spirit that Voltaire ridiculed the notion of a uniform standard in a well known passage of mordant cynicism:

> Demandez à un crapaud ce que c'est la beauté, le grand beau, le τὸ καλὸν. Il vous répondra que c'est sa crapaude avec des gros yeux ronds sortant de sa petite tête, une gueule large et plate, un ventre jaune, un dos brun. Interrogez un nègre de Guinée; le beau est pour lui une peau noire, huileuse, des yeux enfoncés, un nez épaté. Interrogez le diable: il vous dira que le beau est une paire de cornes, quatre griffes et une queue. Consultez enfin les philosophes, ils vous répondront par des galimatias, il lui faut quelque chose conforme à l'archétype de beau en essence, au τὸ καλὸν.[70]

The Abbé Trublet, who in one place at least is as thoroughly pyrrhonistic as Mandeville,[71] expressed likewise the progressivist conception of taste.

> L'idée du beau est le fruit de la succession des exemples & des preceptes. Elle est prise dans divers Ouvrages, & composée des idées particulières de telle ou telle beauté & des differens caractères de beauté. Ainsi l'idée du beau s'étend de jour en jour, à mesure qu'il paroit en chaque genre de nouveaux Ouvrages qui procurent de nouveaux plaisirs & donnent lieu à de nouvelles réflexions. Par là le goût se rafine, s'étend et se perfectionne de plus en plus.[72]

Among English writers who are most emphatic in denying a practical standard of taste must be numbered Mr. and Mrs. Greville, who published in 1756 a book of maxims in the style of La Rochefoucauld. These authors in order to silence the critics of French opera, assert that there is no objective sanction for likings in

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[69]"Of Taste in its Proper Sense . . . .," Common Sense, Feb. 11, 1738; quoted in the Gentleman's Magazine, VIII (1738), 81.

[70]Dictionnaire philosophique, art. "Beau," Oeuvres, ed. Moland (Paris, 1878), XVII, 556-57. Voltaire is inconsistent on the point; he upholds the uniform standard elsewhere, e.g., in the Encyclopédie, art. "Goût," and hence not only (as Mornet suggests, Le Romantisme, p. 193) where his own reputation is concerned.

[71]Essais, IV (1760), 69.

[72]Ibid., III (1754), 174.

music; all kinds are "equally right."

> . . . . you say, that this singing is detestable; I ask why? you answer again that it displeases you. That it displeases you I will readily allow, but that you therefore justly condemn it I may possibly doubt; and let me ask you in my turn whether you have sufficiently considered what is absolutely, and what is only relatively good or bad. There is in nature no criterion by which questions of taste can be determined. . . . .[73]

Critics as important as Hume and Kames pass a similar comment on the undeniable phenomenon of the diversity in men's "sentiments of beauty." But whereas Kames is satisfied to conclude "that beauty in no case whatever is a real quality of matter,"[74] Hume, in one of his early essays, which however is more of a character sketch than a piece of personal philosophy, attributes the diversity to the peculiar structure and constitution of individual minds.

> You will never convince a man, who is not accustomed to Italian music, and has not an ear to follow its intricacies, that a Scotch tune is not preferable. You have not even a single argument, beyond your own taste, which you can employ in your behalf. And to your antagonist his particular taste will always appear a more convincing argument to the contrary. If you be wise, each of you will allow, that the other may be in the right; and having many other instances of this diversity of taste, you will both confess, that beauty and worth are merely of a relative nature, and consist in an agreeable sentiment, produced by an object in a particular mind, according to the peculiar structure and constitution of that mind.[75]

Individual differences in taste

Hume's idea of founding an aesthetic scepticism on the diversities apparent in individual observers was not of course his own invention. A favorite premise with Sextus Empiricus, it had done service for the various sceptics of the seventeenth

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[73] Maxims, Characters, and Reflections, Critical, Satyrical, and Moral (London, 1756), p. 168.

[74] Kames, Elements, I, 261.

[75] Hume, "The Sceptic," in Essays Moral, Political and Literary, I, 217.

century in discounting the results of philosophical speculation;[76] and it had been inevitably applied to taste almost as soon as the term became current. In an early essay "On the Variety of Opinions," Sir Thomas Pope Blount assumed that the intellectual differences which he sought to explain by both physical and moral causes were less surprising when understood as "various Tasts."

> All our several Opinions are nothing but the meer various Tasts of several Minds, framed partly by our several Natures, partly by our different Educations, and Instructions, and partly by the various Encounters, which we have met with in our ways of Life. . . . . There are as many Internal Forms of the Mind as there are External Figures of Men: And the Soul of Man hath its Palat, as well as the Body; Opinion being nothing but the Gusto or Relish of the Soul.[77]

The subjective differences thus admitted as influencing the concepts of beauty and hence of taste are often limited to psychological factors, like "the dispositions of the heart,"[78] or "the complexions" of the soul.[79] But there are also instances of an attempt to trace the differences to a physical cause. The Abbé Bellegarde sets an early precedent in this direction.

> As the Organs are differently disposed in different Persons, so the Objects produce different effects on the Senses. . . . . Not only do Meats and Savours make different Impressions on different Persons, and even on the same person at different times; But it is very probable that other objects do the same on the other respective Organs. Who can say that the Colour which seems white to one Man, does not appear a quite contrary Colour to another? . . . . There is even as great a difference in our Minds as in our Senses. Two Men think differently of the same object. . . . . This diversity proceeds

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[76] An early example of the argument in the seventeenth century is in Pierre Charron, De la Sagesse ... (1601), ed. A. Duval (3 vols.; Paris, 1827), I, chap. xxxviii.

[77] Essays on Several Subjects (London, 1691), p. 155. The completeness of Blount's enumeration of the variant factors is noteworthy. The third, "the various Encounters . . . ." looks thus early to the individual's distinctive store of associations.

[78] J. P. de Crousaz, Traité du beau (Amsterdam, 1715), p. 72; Trublet, II, 57.

[79] W. Smith, Dionysius Longinus (London, 1752), p. xxxiii; also W. Shenstone, Works (London, 1765), II, 271.

> in a great measure from the disposition of the Organs, and the difference of Constitution, and of the Fibres and Substance of the Brain.[80]

The Abbé Du Bos in his apparent desire to make the most of all the variant factors in taste, adds to the differences of inclinations, education, and the like,[81] those also of physical constitution. For this reason he despairs of changing a man's taste in painting: "La chose ne dépend pas plus de lui qu'il dépend d'un homme dont le palais est conformé, de manière que le vin de Champagne lui fait plus de plaisir que le vin d'Espagne, de changer de goût, & d'aimer mieux le vin d'Espagne que l'autre ..."[82] A similar allowance for physical differences in auditory perceptions was made by the pioneer writer on aesthetics, Levesque de Pouilly.

> The different construction of the organs of hearing, is the cause why sounds disagreeable to some persons, are agreeable to others. Petrarch gives us an account of a man, who was less pleased with the singing of nightingales, than with the croaking of frogs. Tis probable that the fibres of his ears were so closely compacted, that a succession of piercing sounds might only shake, without fatiguing them.[83]

The factor of climate

Another variable physical factor, less arbitrary and incalculable than the idiosyncrasies of the individual, that was also suggested by Levesque de Pouilly was the influence of climate.[84] From the time of Jean Bodin in the sixteenth century,[85]

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[80] Letters, pp. 14-16. Similarly Blount in the essay previously cited (Essays, p. 167), despaired of eliminating differences of sentiments and apprehensions, "so long as Men's Organs are of several makes."

[81] Réflexions, I, 480.

[82] Ibid., p. 479.

[83] Theory of Agreeable Sensations (London, 1774), pp. 22-23. Johnson conceded something of the same nature when he said that "difference of taste was, in truth, difference of skill." Cf. Boswell, Life of Johnson, II, 191. See also Beattie, Dissertations, I, 212.

[84] Theory of Agreeable Sensations, p. 62.

[85] De la republique, l. V, chap. i (Paris, 1608), pp. 677-700.

philosophers with the sanction of Plato and Aristotle behind them,[86] had taken kindly to a geographical explanation of national differences, until Montesquieu, writing his Esprit des lois (1748), could confidently propose conformity to the climate as the great criterion in evaluating a nation's laws.[87] Bellegarde and Du Bos had not neglected to mention, if not to exploit, this further explanation of variant tastes;[88] but after them, the appeal to climate is limited rather to discussion of genius, in such questions as the rival qualities of Northern, Southern, and Oriental poetry, or the possibility of an English genius.[89] Still there is occasional evidence that the notion of taste was not altogether absent from the minds of those who engaged in such debates. We find it mentioned explicitly by James Barry when he summarized his indictment against certain critics who exaggerated the importance of physical causes as climate.

> Abbé Du Bos, president Montesquieu, and Abbé Winclemann, have followed one another in assigning limits to the genius of the English: they pretend to point out a certain character of heaviness and want of fancy, which they deduce from physical causes. . . . . They say that we have no imagination, taste, or sensibility: that we are cold and unfeeling to the powers of music: that we can succeed in nothing that requires genius; . . . . that our climate is so distempered, that we disrelish everything, nay, even lift itself. . . . .[90]

Barry himself prefers to seek the explanation of varied tastes in

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[86]See the Republic, 435 E; and Politics, IV. vi.

[87]Cf. Frances Hadley, "The Theory of Milieu in English Criticism, 1660-1801" (Unpublished dissertation, Department of English, University of Chicago, 1924). This well documented history of the theory of climate in literary criticism makes it unnecessary for this study to go over the same ground.

[88]Bellegarde, Letters, pp. 17-18; Du Bos, Réflexions, II, 319.

[89]Thus, e.g., J. Warton, Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope (4th ed.; London, 1782), I, 377; V. Knox, "Conjectures on the Difference between Oriental and Septentrional Poetry," Essays Moral and Literary (2 vols.; London, 1787), II, 330-32; C. Avison, Essay on Musical Expression (London, 1752), pp. 80-81, n.; J. Armstrong, Miscellanies (London, 1770), II, 233-36.

[90]Works (2 vols.; London, 1809), II, 177.

moral causes; for, he says, "so far as you can pursue the knowledge of the state of education and its changes, so far you can account for the taste of a nation, and for its variations, without troubling yourself with ostentatious disquisitions about the climate or soil."[91]

National taste

Whatever the explanation, a distinct difference of taste according to difference of nationality was, by the time that Barry wrote, in 1774, rather generally accepted. Characteristic national traits had been inevitably recognized and commented upon as the growing cosmopolitanism brought people of various nations into literary contact. Descartes, as early as 1637, had pointed out that the environment of France and Germany influenced character in a way quite different from the civilization of China.[92] In England the first lexicographer of the eighteenth century, E. Coles, prefaced his dictionary with an amusing parallel between the various languages and the characters of the people who speak them, and he was probably not original in his observations.

> The several climates of the World have influenc'd the Inhabitants with Natures very different from one another. And in their several Speeches bear some proportion of Analogy with their natures. The Spanish and the Spaniard both are grave, the Italian and the Italians Amorous, the Dutch as boisterous as the Germans, and the French as light as they themselves are. But the moderate Clime of England has indifferently tempered us.[93]

Oratory and the drama were two special fields in which the claim for national standards of criticism found speedy recognition. Perrault, defending the Moderns, is a pioneer in distinguishing

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[91] Ibid., p. 282.

[92] Discours de la méthode, ed. E. Gilson (Paris, 1925), p. 16.

[93] An English Dictionary (London, 1701), "To the Reader."

the various types of eloquence preferred by different nations.

> Estre abondant & copieux: estre concis & serré, estre grave & severe, estre orné & fleury. . . .; ces beautez ne plaisent pas tousjours, n'y à toutes sortes de personnes, & si elles plaisent, c'est tantost plus & tantost moins, selon l'humeur des Auditeurs, ou selon le goust & la mode du siecle. Ainsi les Grecs vifs & penetrans ... voulurent une Eloquence concise & resserée; ... les Asiatiques ... une Eloquence agréable & fleurie; ... les Romains, nombreuse & estenduë.[94]

In England, William Nicholas invoked the same distinction to save the Holy Scriptures from being tried by Greek and Roman standards,[95] while Farquhar used the parallel of suiting the sermon to the audience in order to justify a national standard in dramatic criticism.[96] In this latter aim, he had been anticipated by another playwright-critic, John Dryden, who whenever it served his needs could make a declaration of English independence from Greek and French rules for plays.[97] The French themselves, in spite of the powerful example of their great playwrights, were not unmindful of national traits and differences, particularly in the characters proper to comedy. Thus Du Bos writes:

> Il faut ... que les Comediens copient ce que leur nation peut avoir de singulier dans le geste, dans le maintien & dans la pronunciation. Il faut qu'ils se moulent d'après leurs compatriotes. ... Un Anglois à qui l'on prononce l'arrêt qui le condamne à la mort, montre moins d'agitation qu'un Italien que son juge condamne à un écu d'amende.[98]

In the other arts likewise national differences were noted Jonathan Richardson foresaw with delight the advent of an English

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[94] Parallèle, II, 49-51.

[95] A Conference with a Theist (1699), cited by R. S. Crane, in "An Early Eighteenth-Century Enthusiast for Primitive Poetry: John Husbands," MLN, XXXVII (1922), 35.

[96] Discourse upon Comedy in Reference to the English Stage (London, 1702), in Works (9th ed.; London, 1760), I, 91-92. For a later use of the same parallel, see J. Beattie, Essays on Poetry and Music (3d ed.; London, 1779), p. 200.

[97] Cf. e.g. Preface to All for Love, in W. P. Ker, Dryden's Critical Essays (2 vols.; Oxford, 1900), I, 195.

[98] Réflexions, I, 419-20.

school of Painting.[99] And Addison had previously remarked that Music is "of a relative Nature," and should "fit the Genius of the People."[100] By the middle of the century the rival claims of Italian music and the domestic variety had become one of the favorite debates on the subject of taste, both in France and England.[101]

Apart from these particular applications of national traits to the different arts and genres, the general formulation, on this basis, of a principle of relative taste was a little slower in appearing. Voltaire is probably the earliest apostle of the explicitly named idea. In his Essay on Epick Poetry, in 1727, after citing characteristic passages from Tasso for Italy, from Milton for England, and from Antonio de Solis for Spain, he concludes: "I need no more Examples to demonstrate that there is such a Thing as a National Taste."[102] He compares this national element in literature to the flavor which fruits derive from their native soil and claims that "it is as easy to distinguish a Spanish, an Italian, or an English Author, by their Stile, as to know by their Gate, their Speech and their Features in what Country they were born."[103] While he counselled nations to borrow certain features of taste from their neighbours, he believed that the important factor always to be considered was custom,

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[99] Two Discourses on the Art of Criticism as it relates to Painting (London, 1719), pp. 51-52.

[100] Spectator, No. 29, Apr. 2, 1711. Cf. also his Discourse on Ancient and Modern Learning, in Miscellaneous Works, ed. A. Guthkelch (London, 1914), 458-59.

[101] French echoes of the debate may be noted in Encyclopédie, art. "Ecole," t.V (1755), 335. English examples occur in Greville, p. 169; Beattie, Essays, p. 164.

[102] Essay on Epick Poetry (Paris, 1727), p. 44.

[103] Ibid., p. 42.

"the queen of the world, which changes at pleasure the taste of nations."[104]

Other writers were not slow to develop the same idea. Père Buffier, whose works enjoyed a wide reputation, was among the first to illustrate the diversity of national tastes by extreme examples. His ethnological observations, as summarized by Adam Smith, have a touch of Gulliverian fantasy.

> What different ideas are formed in different nations concerning the beauty of the human shape and countenance? A fair complexion is a shocking deformity upon the coast of Guinea. Thick lips and a flat nose are a beauty. In some nations long ears that hang down upon the shoulders are the objects of universal admiration.[105]

Similarly, Père André, though, as we shall see later, he saved himself from unchecked relativism, acknowledged nevertheless a characteristic "tour d'esprit" in each nation--"grave & majestueux en Espagne, libre & cavalier en France, vehément & impéteux en Angleterre, délicat en fin en Italie, solide et ferme en Allemagne."[106] Condillac likewise finds that the "belle nature" takes the air of each country;[107] and Trublet refuses to rank the diverse tastes of different nations, because they are all equally good.[108]

Among the English writers who seemed particularly interested in making the case for a national system of criticism, in addition to the controversialists in special fields, like Farquhar, already mentioned for the drama, and John Husbands, the defender

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[104]Preface to Brutus (1730), Oeuvres, ed. L. Moland (Paris, 1877-85), II, 318.

[105]Cited in paraphrase by Adam Smith, Theory of Moral Sentiments (London, 1869), p. 288.

[106]Essai sur le beau, p. 99.

[107]Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines (1746), II, i, chap. viii. Cf. G. Lanson, "Les idées littéraires de Condillac," in Etudes d'histoire littéraire (Paris, 1929), pp. 210-23.

[108]Essais, III (1754), 99.

of the Sacred Books with their peculiar "Genius and Customs of the Israelites,"[109] one must note three contemporaries, David Hume,[110] Alexander Gerard,[111] and John Boyle. This last named justifies national diversities on the popular grounds of nature's teeming variety. "Each nation has its own peculiar taste and judgment: nature otherwise must lose one of the chief points she delights in, variety."[112]

But after all, it was Oliver Goldsmith who more than any one else preached in season and out of season a sovereign regard for "the national character" in literature, as in morals. In 1757, he criticized Gray's Odes, because unlike their models by Pindar, they failed to treat "the most popular subjects, ... customs well known . . . . to the meanest persons."[113] More emphatically in the Enquiry, he came back to the point, to make it the practical conclusion of his whole work.

> Truth is a positive, taste a relative excellence. . . . . But it may be objected that this is setting up a particular standard of taste in every country; this is removing that universal one which has hitherto united the armies and enforced the commands of criticism; by this reasoning the critics of one country will not be proper guides to the writers of another; Grecian or Roman rules will not be generally binding in France or England; but the laws designed to improve our taste, by this reasoning must be adapted to the genius of every people, as much as those enacted to promote morality.
>
> What I propose as objections are really the sentiments I mean to prove, not to obviate. I must own it as my opinion that if criticism be at all requisite to promote the interests of learning, its rules should be taken from amongst the inhabitants and adapted to the genius and temper of the country it attempts to refine. . . . . English taste, like English liberty, should be restrained only by laws of its own promoting.[114]

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[109] A Miscellany of Poems by Several Hands (Oxford, 1731), Preface (unpaged).

[110] "Of the Standard of Taste," Essays Moral, etc., I, 282.

[111] Essay on Taste (London, 1759), pp. 200-201.

[112] Brumoy, The Greek Theatre, Preface, p. ii.

[113] Monthly Review, XVII (1757), 239; Works, ed. J. W. M. Gibbs (London, 1885-86), IV, 296.

[114] Works, III, 533.

After Goldsmith the battle is won. The most obscure critics pay their acknowledgments to the national taste. John Gregory tells the Edinburgh Philosophical Society that "all criticism in a certain degree must be temporary and local."[115] The Abbé Séran de la Tour states the dogma in France: "Chaque pays doit avoir un système nationale de critique."[116] In England, Stockdale (1778), Sherlock (1780), and Jackson (1783) illustrated the comparison of the tastes of various nations.[117]

Custom as the arbiter of taste

In explaining the formation of a national taste, the alternative to a theory of climatic influence was an insistence on moral factors, which could be summed up under the one word, custom. The traditions of a nation as codified in education were quite commonly asserted to affect aesthetic ideals and preferences. Shaftesbury took this line when he exalted the effects of liberty upon the flowering of the liberal arts, though for this he was later to be accused by Warton of blinking the facts for the sake of a theory.[118] On the same assumption, Fénelon remarked that the customs of the Greeks were more calculated to produce poets than those of the Cimbrians and Teutons.[119] But the philosophical

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[115] A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man, with those of the Animal World (2d ed.; London, 1766), p. 127.

[116] Art de sentir et juger en matière de goût (1762); cited by Mornet, Le romantisme, p. 188.

[117] Stockdale, Inquiry, pp. 63-64; M. Sherlock, Nouvelles lettres d'un voyageur anglais (2d ed.; London, 1780), pp. 38-39; W. Jackson, Thirty Letters on Various Subjects (3d ed.; London, 1795), pp. 169-70.

[118] Letter concerning Design, in Second Characters, ed. B. Rand (Cambridge, 1914), p. 23. For Warton's criticism, see Essay on . . . . Pope, I (ed. 1782), 180-81.

[119] Lettre à de La Motte, May 4, 1714, in La Motte, Oeuvres, III, 62.

elaboration of the notion had to wait for Père Claude Buffier, who starting from the platonic premise of a participation by each individual of the species in the ideal universal form, concluded by an optimistic application of the principle of the greatest common denominator, that the most customary form "represented ideal beauty which nature was striving to produce in the individuals."[120] The relativistic implications of such a theory when transferred from nature to art were recognized and deplored by several critics who nevertheless admitted within certain limits a legitimate influence of custom on aesthetic ideals. Among these may be mentioned Buffier's confrère and rival, Père André, who remarked how ugliness was thus travestied into beauty, little eyes and thick lips becoming acceptable as national beauties;[121] the Abbé Trublet, who illustrated this arbitrary but only partial principle by the diverse requirements of French and Latin composition;[122] Joseph Spence, who characterized custom as "the greatest and most general Misleader of our Judgment in relation to Beauty";[123] and Adam Smith himself, who after reporting Buffier's theory in great detail and illustrating it from certain conventional features of French and English versification, concludes unfavorably as to its general application: "I cannot . . . . be induced to believe that our sense even of external beauty is founded altogether on custom."[124]

There were not wanting, however, a certain number of critics who felt little or none of this reluctance to going the whole

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[120]Summarized by Adam Smith, Theory of Moral Sentiments, pp. 286-88.

[121]Essai sur le beau, p. 33.

[122]Essais, III, 142.

[123]Crito (1756); in R. Dodsley, Fugitive Pieces (London, 1762), I, 49.

[124]Theory of Moral Sentiments, p. 288.

way in associating taste with habit or custom. Goldsmith is largely motivated by this consideration in his stand for national criticism.[125] Kames, in closing his chapter with "the discussion of a question more delicate than abstruse, viz., What authority custom ought to have over our taste in the fine arts?" answers himself in such a way as to show that it is only his zeal for the fixity of the moral standard which holds him back from embracing relativism in aesthetics.[126] Shenstone, confining his attention more exclusively to the aesthetic question, gives striking evidence of his regard for the power of custom.

> Habit . . . . seems to have an influence to which we can affix no bounds. Suppose the generality of mankind formed with a mouth from ear to ear, and that it were requisite in point of respiration, would not the present make of mouths have subjected a man to the name of Bocha chica? . . . .
>
> Our taste of beauty is perhaps compounded of all the ideas that have entered the imagination from our birth. This seems to occasion the different opinions that prevail concerning it. For instance a foreign eye esteems those features and dresses handsome, which we think deformed.[127]

A more influential exponent of the same doctrine is Condillac, who in his rôle of tutor warns his young charge, the Prince of Parma, that the rules of art, and consequently taste, change "with usage and custom."

> C'est une mode qui succède à une autre, & qui, passant bientôt elle-même, est remplacée par une plus nouvelle. Alors on a pour toute régle que ce qui plaît est beau, & on ne songe pas que ce qui plait aujourd'hui ne plaira pas demain.[128]

In 1782, James Beattie illustrated the potency of custom in diversifying literary history, by contrasting the wits of the Restoration with the more balanced thinkers of the Queen Anne period;[129] and strange to say, when he submitted his manuscript

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[125] Enquiry, Works, III, 534-35.
[126] Elements, II, 108, 110.
[127] "On Taste," Works, II, 270, 282.
[128] "De l'art d'écrire," in Cours d'études, etc., II, 330.
[129] Dissertations, I, 212.

to Sir Joshua Reynolds, he received nothing but praise for his views. Far from decrying a deference to custom in matters of art, Sir Joshua, in spite of his prevailing uniformitarian bias, claimed that he had anticipated Beattie's ideas by twenty years.

> About twenty years since, I thought much on this subject, and am now glad to find many of those ideas which then passed in my mind put in such good order by so excellent a metaphysician. My view of the question did not extend beyond my own profession; it regarded only the beauty of form, which I attributed entirely to custom or habit.[130]

Time as a factor in variant tastes

A particular symptom of the increasing emphasis on custom in taste was the development of the historical point of view in criticism. To admit that authors were to be evaluated, not by a single unchanging standard, but in the light of the knowledge and ideals of their particular age was in sum a significant concession to a diversitarian system of taste. It applied to rigid uniformity the solvent of time much as cosmopolitanism introduced the variable of space.

In the quarrel with the Ancients, the Moderns had given a new vogue to the historical point of view.[131] Their case rested largely on the inevitable refinement that time brings to civilized life and hence to the taste for its reflections in litterature.[132] On the other hand, the Ancients could defend their idols against the positive attacks of the new critics only by pleading that

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[130] Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds, ed. F. W. Hilles (Cambridge, 1929), p. 90.

[131] For early history of the principle, cf. G. M. Miller, The Historical Point of View in English Criticism, 1570-1770 (Heidelberg, 1913).

[132] Cf. La Motte, Réflexions sur la critique, Oeuvres, III, 187.

allowance be made for "the nature of the times."[133] At first Homer was the chief focus of the discussion; it was in his defence that the historical point of view was most frequently urged, until Blackwell, in 1735, made it the underlying thesis of his work that "every kind of writing depends upon the Manners of the Age when it was produced."[134] Shakespeare, somewhat later, was made to benefit by the same treatment, both Pope and Johnson pleading that he be judged by his own age.[135] Ariosto and Spenser were vindicated on the same principle by Thomas Warton and Richard Hurd.[136] And general statements of the kind are common enough through the second half of the century.[137]

How appreciation of the artist's aim affects taste

Closely related to the regard for the historical point of view, and in many cases supplementing it as a defence of those writings which failed to pass the scrutiny of "the rules," was the consideration of the author's particular aim. Pope phrased the principle in his couplet:

> A perfect judge will read each work of wit
> With the same spirit that its author writ;[138]

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[133]Pope, Preface to The Iliad (ed. G. Wakefield), I, xxxviii.

[134]Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer (London, 1735), pp. 14-15. See also J. Arbuckle, A Collection of Letters and Essays . . . . (London, 1726), I, 95; Du Bos, II, 544-46.

[135]Cf. D. Nichol Smith, Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare (Glasgow, 1903), pp. 50, 132.

[136]T. Warton, Observations on the Faerie Queen (2d ed.; London, 1762), I, 15. R. Hurd, Letters on Chivalry and Romance, ed. E. J. Morley (London, 1911), p. 118.

[137]Cf. T. Sheridan, British Education (London, 1756), p. 345; Warton, Essay on . . . . Pope, I, 3; T. Gray, "Some Remarks on the Poems of John Lydgate," Works, ed. E. Gosse (New York, 1890), I, 392; E. Gibbon, Essai sur l'étude de la littérature (London, 1761), pp. 24-25; Johnson, Lives of the Poets, I, 411; Barry, Works, II, 265; Goldsmith, Works, IV, 349.

[138]Essay on Criticism, II, 33-34.

and he fell back upon it to save the Odyssey from condemnation for not being like the Aeneid.[139] In 1715, Hughes anticipated Hurd's case for Spenser by remarking how that poet had deliberately declined to subject himself to the rules for the epic.[140] Brumoy later bespoke the same justice for the Greek tragic poets.[141] Hume linked the historical attitude with the consideration of the author's aim in his statement of the importance and difficulty of the ideal critic's point of view:

> We may observe, that every work of art, in order to produce its due effect on the mind, must be surveyed in a certain point of view, and cannot be fully relished by persons, whose situation, real or imaginary, is not conformable to that which is required by the performance. An orator addresses himself to a particular audience, and must have a regard to their particular genius, interests, opinions, passions, and prejudices. . . . . A critic of a different age or nation, who should peruse this discourse, must have all these circumstances in his eye, and must place himself in the same situation as the audience, in order to form a true judgment of the oration.[142]

This complicated conception of the critic's function, with the delicate appreciation which it implied of the author's intention, his age, and the other variable circumstances attending the production of the work, did not necessarily invalidate all judicial criticism. Yet it did render it exceedingly difficult, so difficult, in fact, that no one could pretend that all men were capable of properly assessing the true merit of a work, since qualified critics were only the select few, endowed with a discerning and enlightened taste. This power, however, though not altogether destitute of uniform principles, seemed nevertheless subject to so many variable considerations that in practice it

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[139] Odyssey, V. 329.

[140] Works of Spenser (6 vols.; London, 1750), I, Preface 1715), lx. Cf. Hurd, Letters on Chivalry, p. 122.

[141] The Greek Theatre, I, ix.

[142] "Of the Standard of Taste," Essays Moral, etc., I, 276.

might also be said to be formed on a relative standard. The taste of one country or of one age was certainly not that of another country or of another age.

Taste dependent on association of ideas

Probably the most subjective aesthetic theory which won adherents in the eighteenth century was built on the psychological doctrine of the association of ideas. Obviously the roots of this doctrine were ancient. The important rôle played by reminiscence and suggestion in the formation of ideas, and more particularly in their sequence or train, had been early recognized by Aristotle,[143] and continuing through the Middle Ages,[144] found re-statement in Hobbes,[145] and with greater emphasis in Locke.[146] But the application of the principle to aesthetics was naturally later. In 1715, Crousaz, as a pioneer, explains the process without using the word.

> Certains objets nous ont frappé agréablement ou desagréablement dans notre enfance, ou dans un âge plus formé: leurs impressions ont été vives ou durables, & quoi qu'on les ait presque oubliez, & que même quelquefois on ne s'en souvienne plus du tout, il en reste neanmois des vestiges qui se retracent et se r'ouvrent à la vûe de tout ce qui a du rapport avec ce qui les avoit fait naître ... & pour en faire application à notre sujet, on trouve beau ce qui ressemble à ce que nous avons aimé dans un âge où la prevention, les sens, & la machine nous dominaient uniquement ... [147]

Hutcheson, a decade later, calls "the Association of Ideas . . . . one great Cause of the apparent Diversity of Fancys in the Sense

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[143] Cf. De memoria et reminiscentia, ii, in W. A. Hammond, Aristotle's Psychology (London, 1902), pp. 202-8. See also Hamilton's note in Works of Thomas Reid (3d ed.; London, 1882), p. 890, and H. C. Warren, History of the Association Psychology (Baltimore, 1921).

[144] E.g., in St. Thomas, Commentarium in Aristotelem, lect. 5; and in the Summa theologica, II-IIae, q. 49, a. 1.

[145] See Of Human Nature, chap. iv, s. 2.

[146] Essay on the Human Understanding, Bk. II, chap. xxx (added to 4th ed.; London, 1700).

[147] Traité, pp. 54-55.

of Beauty," and gives "some Instances."

> The Beauty of Trees, their cool Shades and their Aptness to conceal from Observation have made Groves and Woods, the usual Retreat to those who love Solitude, especially to the Religious, the Pensive, the Melancholy, & the Amorous. And do we not find that we have so joined the Ideas of these Dispositions of Mind with these external Objects that they always recur to us along with them?[148]

Practically this variety of individual associations is often identified with personal prejudices. Occasionally the identity is frankly recognized, as when Levesque de Pouilly remarks how "the secret affinity, or relation to our particular disposition often creates pleasure out of an object disagreeable in itself," and illustrates his remark with the example: "A new born infant appears rather loathsome to mankind in general, but is the most delightful of all objects to the parent."[149] David Hartley, who admitted his indebtedness to the Rev. John Gay, the author of a prefatory dissertation in Edmund Law's translation of King's De Origine Mali,[150] expounded an exclusively associationist psychology in which he felt constrained to deny all fixed standards of beauty. For him the aesthetic judgment depends purely on the casual association of ideas.

> . . . . as the various figures used in speaking and writing have great influences over each other, alter, and are much altered, as to their relative energy, by our passions, customs, opinions, constitutions, education, &c, there can be no fixed standard for determining what is beauty here, or what is the degree of it. Every person may find, that his taste in these things receives considerable changes in his progress through life; and may by careful observations, trace up these changes to the associations that have caused them.[151]

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[148] Inquiry, p. 76. For a parallel passage, cf. the work of Hutcheson's friend, J. Arbuckle, I, 88.

[149] Theory, p. 70.

[150] Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty and His Expectations (4th ed.; London, 1801), I, Preface, iii.

[151] Ibid., p. 430.

Hartley's French contemporaries, Diderot, Montesquieu, and Condillac stressed the same source of variations in taste;[152] and in England, the force of the argument was recognized even by those who, like Burke, Gerard, and Blair, did not accept all of its conclusions.[153] One who did accept it without reservations was Hartley's disciple and popularizer, Joseph Priestley. Among many illustrative passages in his lectures, the following may be noted as a clear anticipation of Alison and Jeffrey:

> Had all minds the very same degree of sensibility, that is, were they equally affected by the same impressions, and were we all exposed to the same influences, through the whole course of our lives, there would be no room for the least diversity of taste among mankind. . . . . But since our situations in life, and the occurrences of our lives, are so very various, it cannot but have happened, that different persons will have associated different ideas and sensations with the same objects; and, consequently, they will be differently affected upon the perception of them.[154]

In spite of several such statements in Priestley and his predecessors, it probably remains true that "Mr. Alison's essays on the Principle of Taste, published in 1790, afforded the earliest complete promulgation of the Theory of Association."[155] What Alison chiefly did in his detailed application of the new psychology of his day to the problem of aesthetics was, first, to make associationism such an inevitable explanation of every phenomenon of taste, that to suggest any other would seem like a return to the doctrine of innate ideas; and secondly, to reduce the educational discipline of a good taste to a process of storing up the right

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[152] Diderot, Recherches, Oeuvres, X, 40; Montesquieu, Encyclopédie, art. "Goût," VII, 765; Condillac, Cours d'études, II, 337.

[153] Their compromise will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

[154] Lectures on Oratory and Criticism (London, 1777), pp. 133-34. Cf. also, ibid., pp. 73-75, 130-32.

[155] Sir Thomas Lauder, Sir Uvedale Price on the Picturesque (London, 1842), Introductory Essay "On the Origin of Taste," p. 4.

associations. One passage will illustrate this twofold tendency.

> No man, in general, is sensible to beauty in those subjects with regard to which he has not previous ideas. The beauty of a theory, or of a relic of antiquity, is unintelligible to a peasant. The charms of the country are altogether lost upon a citizen who has passed his life in town. In the same manner, the more that our ideas are increased, or our conceptions extended upon any subject, the greater the number of associations we connect with it, the stronger is the emotion of sublimity or beauty we receive from it.[156]

It only remained for logic and boldness to draw out the relativistic conclusions implicit in this aesthetic theory. Francis Jeffrey, the most influential reviewer and sponsor of Alison, was quite equal to the task. Through his essay in the Edinburgh Review,[157] later expanded in "his eloquent and perspicuous article in the Encyclopedia Brittanica,"[158] Jeffrey championed the doctrine of a taste entirely relative to the individual's particular complexus of associated ideas. As the subject thus passes out of our chronological limits, we leave it with this typical Jeffrean statement of the view:

> Our sense of beauty depends entirely on our previous experience of similar pleasure or emotions. . . . . It follows, therefore, that no object is beautiful in itself, or could appear so antecedent to our experience of direct pleasures or emotions, and that as an infinite number of objects may thus reflect interesting ideas, so all of them may acquire the title of beautiful, although utterly diverse and disparate in their nature, and possessing nothing in common but the accidental power of reminding us of other emotions.[159]

Thus like the victory of the Moderns and the plea for national criticism, this new psychology, as it gained increasing favor, made it more difficult to sustain a uniformitarian doctrine of taste.

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[156] Essays on Taste, p. 80.

[157] Edinburgh Review, XVIII (1811), 1-46.

[158] Sir Thos. Lauder, p. 4.

[159] Contributions to the Edinburgh Review (3 vols.; London, 1846), I, 10-11.

iii. A Compromise Standard, Uniform but Adaptable

The logical conclusion from a completely relative standard of taste was aesthetic pyrrhonism, which entrenched itself behind the maxim, "No disputing about tastes." Jeffrey, following Alison, was to accept the conclusion with something more than equanimity.

> If things are not beautiful in themselves, but only as they serve to suggest interesting conceptions to the mind, then everything which does in point of fact suggest such a conception to any individual, is beautiful to that individual; and it is not only quite true that there is no room for disputing about tastes, but that all tastes are equally just and correct. . . . .[160]

But this prospect did not seem so alluring to everyone. In 1785, a few years before Alison wrote, the philosopher Thomas Reid deplored a too general application of "the common proverb," because "the same arguments might be used with equal force against any standard of truth."[161] Reynolds had issued a similar warning, a decade earlier in his "Seventh Discourse."[162] And Hume, in his essay of 1757, while he reported and explained, was careful not to accept this "species of philosophy, which cuts off all hopes . . . . represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste."[163]

In thus appreciating the practical difficulties of maintaining a standard of taste in the face of the manifest phenomenon of individual and national divergences, and yet refusing to be driven to pyrrhonism, all of these writers were preceded by Père André, who thus summed up the general difficulty before meeting it:

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[160] "Essay on Beauty," Edinburgh Review, XVIII (1811), 43.

[161] Of the Intellectual Powers of Man, in Works (Cambridge, 1850), pp. 491-92.

[162] Fifteen Discourses, p. 103.

[163] Essays Moral, etc., I, 268.

> Nos divers âges, nos caractères particuliers, nos humeurs, nos situations différentes, nos partis, nos intérêts, sont autres sources intarissables de variations et de variétés dans les jugemens que nous portons des Ouvrages d'esprit. Or de là, concluent nos modernes Pyrrhoniens, ne s'ensuit il pas que la beauté de ces sortes d'Ouvrages n'a rien de fixe et d'absolu? ... D'où ils inferent, sans façon que nous devons étendre à tout le proverbe ordinaire, qu'il ne faut pas disputer des goûts.164

Before considering André's answer, which rallied probably the greatest number of adherents, it will be well to mention the other lines along which the opponents of relativism took their stand.

Denial or restriction of the "no disputing" maxim

"There is no disputing about taste." Whether or not the maxim had a purely gustatory origin,[165] it was a natural expedient of the embarrassed critics to confine it exclusively to the domain of the cooks. Towards the middle of the century, the Abbé Trublet rejected the famous comparison of the ragoût.[166] About the same time Eliza Haywood in her well-known periodical was restricting the lawless maxim to "that taste which is guided by the senses."

> That there is no account to be given for taste is a maxim we hear commonly repeated; and that it is so seldom disputed is because we see such variety of odd whims take place, each of which are by its followers supported with vehemence: but this will be found of no weight with any one who takes the pains to distinguish between that taste which is guided by the senses, and that which is purely the effects of the mind.167

Much more vigorously, Voltaire affirms the possibility of disputing taste in art, however arbitrary may be its other manifestations, particularly in matters culinary.

164Essai sur le beau, pp. 78-79.

165Such is the suggestion of B. Croce, Aesthetics, etc. p. 366.

166Cf. Essais, II, 73.

167Female Spectator (3d ed.; London, 1750), III, 116.

> On dit qu'il ne faut pas disputer des goût[s], & on a raison quand il n'est question que du goût sensuel, de la repugnance qu'on a pour une certaine nourriture. ... Il n'en est pas le même dans les Arts; comme ils ont des beautés réeles, il y a un bon goût qui les discerne & un mauvais goût qui les ignore; & on corrige souvent le défaut d'esprit qui donne un goût de travers.168

Even within the domain of the gustatory sense, Burke introduces the distinction between natural and acquired tastes; it is only of the latter, because of their arbitrary nature, that there is no possible disputing.

> When it is said, taste cannot be disputed, it can only mean that no one can strictly answer what pleasure or pain some particular man may find from the taste of some particular thing. This indeed cannot be disputed; but we may dispute, and with sufficient clearness too, concerning the things which are naturally pleasing or disagreeable to the sense.169

Kant, as one would expect, distinguished the maxim on the still higher ground of the difference between the agreeable and the beautiful. He contended that the aesthetic judgment as opposed to that of the agreeable, claims universality.

> One man likes the tone of wind instruments, another prefers that of string instruments. To quarrel over such points with the idea of condemning another's judgment as incorrect when it differs from our own, as if the opposition between the two judgments were logical would be folly. With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: Every one has his own taste (that of sense). The beautiful stands on quite a different footing. It would, on the contrary, be ridiculous if any one who plumed himself upon his taste were to think of justifying himself by saying: This object (the building we see, the dress that person has on, the concert we hear, the poem submitted to our criticism) is beautiful for me. For if it merely pleases him, he must not call it beautiful. Many things may for him possess charm and agreeableness--no one cares about that; but when he puts a thing on a pedestal and calls it beautiful, he demands the same delight from others . . . . and to this extent it is not open to men to say: Every one has his own taste. This would be equivalent to saying that there is no such thing at all as taste, i.e., no aesthetic judgment capable of making a rightful claim upon the assent of all men.170

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168 Encyclopédie, art. "Goût," VII (1757), 761.

169 "Of Taste," Works, I, 56.

170 Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgment, ed. J. C. Meredith (Oxford, 1911), I, 1, 8; 52.

Refutation of particular arguments
for relative taste

One of the weaknesses of the advocates of a relative standard was their tendency to concentrate too exclusively on some particular argument. It was all very well to show that taste often depended on some particular variable, time, place, or other circumstances, but it was a more difficult matter to prove that this was the whole story. The uniformitarian could appeal to experiences on his side. It was thus that amidst much talk about the different meridians of London and Athens, some were found to recall that not all drama depended upon degrees of longitude and latitude. So also a little later the theorists who banked so heavily on climate and soil were called to task by advocates of the moral influences; and even the comparatively moderate group, who championed the historical point of view, had to contend with the opposition of Goldsmith, who delighted, not altogether consistently with his relativism of place, in hailing Homer and his compeers before the bar of eighteenth-century standards.[171]

But the two bases of relativistic aesthetics for which the most sweeping claims were made, and which accordingly were the most exposed to the exceptions of the conservatives, were the utilitarian and associationist conceptions of beauty. Diderot, though weak on the positive side of his own contribution, is an admirable critic of those who would reduce all beauty to a recognition of usefulness.

> De quelle utilité sont en architecture les imitations de la nature et de ses productions? à quelle fin placer une colonne et des guirlandes où il ne faudrait qu'un potier de bois, ou qu'un massif de pierre? ... Mais le goût de l'imitation se

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[171] Critical Review, IX (1760), 13-14, 17-18.

> fait sentir dans les choses dont le but unique est de plaire, et nous admirons souvent des formes sans que la notion de l'utile nous y porte. ... Enfin on discerne tous le jours de la beauté dans des fleurs, des plantes, et mille ouvrages de la nature dont l'usage nous est inconnu.[172]

Edmund Burke traces the utilitarian theory to the sophism which makes us take that for a cause which is only a concomitant, and he multiplies examples to show that beauty does not always accompany utility: "The wedge-like snout of a swine, ... the great bag hanging to the bill of a pelican . . . . the stomach, the lungs, the liver . . . . are incomparably well adapted to their purposes; yet they are far from having any beauty."[173] Similarly, Montesquieu for France,[174] and Kant for Germany,[175] recall almost in thomistic terms, the disinterestedness of the aesthetic judgment.

Burke was also among those who protested against exaggerating the rôle of the associationist process in aesthetics. Here again, he pleads for a balanced judgment, and postulates an original natural basis of taste on which association may later build.

> But as it must be allowed that many things affect us after a certain manner, not by any natural powers they have for that purpose but by associations; so it would be absurd, on the other hand, to say that all things affect us by association only; since some things must have been originally and naturally agreeable or disagreeable, from which the others derive their associated powers; and it would be, I fancy, to little purpose to look for the cause of our passions in association, until we fail of it in the natural properties of things.[176]

Formey[177] and James Usher[178] issue the like warning; and even after Alison's exposition of the theory, his admirer Dugald

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[172] Recherches, etc., in Oeuvres, X, 22-23.
[173] "On the Sublime . . . .," Works, I, 125-26.
[174] Encyclopédie, art. "Goût," VII, 762.
[175] Kant's Critique, p. 43.
[176] "On the Sublime . . . .," Works, I, 144.
[177] Essai sur le beau, par le Père André, lxvii-lxviii.
[178] Clio, p. 25.

Stewart is solicitous lest the suggestion be pushed too far.

> . . . . the influence of association on our judgments concerning beauty and deformity, is still more remarkable than on our speculative conclusions; a circumstance which has led some philosophers to suppose, that association is sufficient to account for the origin of these notions, and that there is no such thing as a standard of Taste, founded on the principles of the human constitution. But this is undoubtedly pushing the theory a great deal too far. The association of ideas can never account for the origin of a new notion; or of a pleasure essentially different from all the others which we know.[179]

Difference of taste explained without denial of a uniform norm

The most strait-laced uniformitarians could hardly deny the evident phenomenon of some diversity of tastes among individuals and groups. But they could keep their chosen attitude of judicial dogmatism by attributing one of the contradictory aesthetic judgments to a defective taste. As a matter of fact, this was done often enough. Dacier, followed by Gildon, denounced bad taste as born of ignorance of "the rules," and alteration by passion.[180] Indeed, all attacks on bad taste, and there was no dearth of them through the century, assumed that good taste, however rare its occurrence, never contradicted itself. Variations in the degrees of good taste there undoubtedly were, but they could be explained as the more or less happy balance of judgment and sensibility, imagination and education.[181]

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[179] Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind (2d ed.; London, 1802), p. 372.

[180] Cf. Aristotle's Art of Poetry, Preface, Sig. A 6, recto; and Gildon, Complete Art, pp. 137-38. Even Hume does not neglect this explanation of divergence in taste; see his Essays Moral, etc., p. 278.

[181] Agreement on this point among writers otherwise diverse is remarkable. Cf. Formey, p. 178; Trublet, Essais, II, 24; Hume, p. 278; Gerard, pp. 97-98; Burke, I, 62; W. Duff, Essay on Original Genius (2d ed.; London, 1767), pp. 64-67; H. Kames, Sketches of the History of Man (3d ed.; Dublin, 1779), I, 113; Blair, I, 27, 33.

But another way of meeting the same objection, on the whole less frequent, but far more assimilative of the truth in relativism, was to recognize the fact that the same object for the exercise of taste had different aspects capable of appealing to quite opposite inclinations or points of view. Bellegarde in 1702 made this the basis of a plea for tolerance.

> . . . . since every Man sees and judges after his own manner, and has his own Sphere and Extent of Understanding, we ought to be cautious in condemning the Tast of others, tho' it be contrary to our own. If we saw the Objects in the same point of Perspective, and in the same Position as they see them, we would think their Reasonings and their Decisions were just. Before we condemn them, we ought to consider all the Reasons which oblige them to judge as they do.[182]

In the middle of the century Batteux illustrates the principle by refusing to adjudicate the rival claims of French and Italian music, since one was not good and the other bad: "Ce sont deux soeurs, ou plutôt deux faces du même object."[183] This, he makes it clear in the light of his uniformitarian doctrine, is the only way to safeguard at once the principle of contradiction and the phenomenon of legitimate variety in taste.

> On voit que les goûts ne peuvent être differens, sans cesser d'être bons, que quand leurs objets sont différens. Car s'ils ont le même objet, et que l'un approuve et l'autre le condamne, il y en aura un des deux qui sera mauvais: et si l'un approuve ou le condamne jusqu'à un certain degré, il y aura un des deux qui sera moins fin, mois étendu, mois délicat, et qui sera par consequent, mauvais, au moins par comparaison avec l'autre. ... [184]

Melmoth exemplified this diversity of the objects of taste in the domain of painting, when he remarked how the excellence of the Roman style is concentrated on design, that of the Venetians on colouring.[185] Usher, for a like reason, declared that debate on

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[182] Letters, p. 9.
[183] Les beaux-arts, in Principes, I, 97.
[184] Ibid., p. 100.
[185] Fitzosborne Letters, p. 187.

the comparative excellence of Homer and Virgil could be endless, since "their distinguishing beauties vary in kind."[186] The limitations, however, of this source of variety in taste are set down by Blair in magisterial terms that seem to echo Batteux:

> I must observe farther, that this admissible diversity of Taste can only take place where the objects of Taste are different. Where it is with respect to the same object that men disagree, when one condemns that as ugly, which another admires as highly beautiful; then it is no longer diversity, but direct opposition that takes place; and therefore one must be in the right, and another in the wrong, unless that absurd paradox were allowed to hold, that all Tastes are equally good and true.[187]

Taste as inclination, distinguished from appreciation

The different subjective dispositions, which made various observers partial to particular aspects of the same object, were precisely what was sometimes meant by the term, "taste." Undoubtedly this confusion accounted, at least in part, for the despair implied in the no-disputing maxim. The double meaning of inclination and appreciation was shared, at the beginning of the century by the two words, "taste" and "genius." For it is in the course of a discussion "Of Genius," in 1719, that we read the following: "The better , and in Truth, only valuable Part of Mankind have a turn for one sort of Business or other; but with great variety of Taste. Some are addicted to deep Thought and Contemplations. . . Some have a Taste for Musick, some for History. . . . ."[188]

It was naturally easy to connect the diversity of native penchants with the growing variety of aesthetic ideals. Akenside made it the subject of his verses:

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[186] Clio, p. 32.
[187] Lectures, p. 28.
[188] Occasional Paper, III (1719), pp. 6-7.

> Different minds
> Incline to different objects; one pursues
> The vast alone, the wonderful, the wild;
> Another sighs for harmony and grace,
> And gentlest beauty.189

Trublet, writing in 1749, was probably the first who noted explicitly this particular ambiguity of the word.

> Le mot de goût se prend dans deux sens très-différens: 1. pour inclination, panchant, amour, &c. 2. pour discernement, sentiment juste, fin & prompt, &c. On peut avoir du goût dans le premier sens, & n'en pas avoir dans le second.190

The distinction thus pointed out became five years later the Abbé's refutation of the pyrrhonistic maxim:

> Quand on dit qu'il ne faut point disputer des goûts, cela s'entend surtout des inclinations qu'on a pour certaines choses, plutot que pour d'autres. Il ne faut point disputer contre un homme qui aime mieux la Peinture que la Musique, les Tableaux d'Histoire que les Païsages, la Comédie que la Tragédie, &c. Mais on peut disputer contre quelqu'un qui, avec de l'esprit & du goût se trompe neanmoins dans le jugement qu'il porte de tel ou tel Ouvrage. ... 191

Twenty years later, James Usher proposed to remove the confusion by giving the name of "mixed taste," to the "casual likings and aversions in matters naturally indifferent."192 The term did not come into common use, but the distinction which gave rise to it continued to be remarked by various teachers.193

The standard of taste both uniform and relative

However well founded this distinction between the two uses of the word "taste," it could not entirely satisfy the relativists. They were ready to counter that even in the restricted sense of aesthetic appreciation there remained national, historical, and

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189 *Pleasures of the Imagination*, III, 546 ff.
190 *Essais*, II, 70.
191 *Ibid.*, III, 179-80.
192 *Clio*, p. 34.
193 E.g., by Reynolds, "Seventh Discourse," *Fifteen Discourses*, p. 127.

even personal differences of taste to be explained before a uniform criterion could be saddled upon criticism. It was to meet this difficulty, and at the same time to assimilate the truth on which it was based, that as the century wore on, critics began more and more to make concessions to the national and otherwise arbitrary elements in taste, while still upholding a fundamental universal substratum, common to all nations and ages.

In itself this was not a discovery of the eighteenth century. Its philosophic roots were deep in the question of universals, so central to Greek philosophy, and so frequently discussed through the Middle Ages. There was no reason why aesthetic theory, except in moments of enthusiastic aberration, should ever lose sight of the fact that beauty, whatever its essence as an abstract universal, never occurred in the realm of reality except as a particular individual manifestation, endowed with very definite discriminating notes. Moreover, even with such a vague thing as Nature, or more specifically human nature, for the criterion of aesthetic taste, it was equally impossible to pretend either that each nation or individual is a law unto itself, or that the individual objects of art do not inevitably reflect, besides the universal beauty, some national or personal characteristics of their makers, their subjects, or the audience for whom they were made. It was bad philosophy to deny either the universal or the singular in any beautiful object; it was good taste to recognize both.

These ideas may at times have been obscured, but they were never wholly lost to view. At the beginning of this period, Perrault was distinctly in this tradition of compromise when he wrote:

> ... il faut distinguer deux sortes de beautez dans l'Eloquence ... comme on le peut faire dans toutes les choses du monde. Des beautez universelles & absoluës, c'est à dire qui plaisent en tout temps, en tous lieux, & à toutes

> sortes de personnes; d'autres particulieres & relatives, qui ne plaisent qu'à certaines personnes, qu'en certains lieux, & qu'en certains temps.194

What is seemingly the earliest application of this distinction to taste occurred when Roger de Piles attempted to explain the various "sorts of Taste in Painting."

> The Natural Goût is the Idaea we conceive of anything at the sight of simple Nature. . . . . The Artificial Goût is the Idaea we conceive at the sight of another Mans Works by the good opinion we have of our Master's Knowledge and Reasons. . . . . The Goût of each Nation is an Idaea, which the Works that are made or seen in any particular Country form in the Mind of those who dwell in it.195

Literary criticism likewise, as it developed itself by means of the various disputes that marked the turn of the century, manifested a similar power of discriminating the elements of taste. The defence of Homer's crude manners by the appeal to the historical point of view, the apology for Biblical literature, the plea for a national theatre, and all the other discussions which have been mentioned as fostering a measure of revolt from too strictly uniformitarian standards, tended more or less consciously to draw a line between those elements of art which were universal and obligatory, and the others which were adaptable to time and place. Voltaire, drawing such a line in 1727, was probably the first to name the two sides of it, universal and national taste.

> It is true there are Beauties which the Taste of every Nation equally relish. Since all Europe hath set up the Greek and Roman Authors for Models of Writing, Homer and Demosthenes, Virgil and Tully have in some measure united under their Laws our European Nations, and made of so many and different Countries a single Commonwealth of Letters. But still our particular Customs have introduc'd among them all, a new Sort of Taste, peculiar to each Nation.196

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194 Parallèle, II (2d ed.; Paris, 1693), 48-49.
195 Art of Painting (London, 1706), p. 393.
196 Essay on Epic Poetry, p. 41.

Another critic, probably held in higher regard than Voltaire by their contemporaries, Père Brumoy, recognized in the "taste of an age," the fusion of two kinds of beauty, one immutable, and the other depending upon time and place.

> . . . . they [Critics] have endeavoured to discover the original of taste, and have found that there is not only a stable and immutable beauty, as there is a common understanding in all times and places, which is never obsolete; but there is another kind of beauty, such as we are treating, which depends upon times and places, and is therefore changeable. Such is the imperfection of every thing below, that one mode of beauty is never found without a mixture of the other, and from these two blended together results what is called the taste of the age.[197]

The separation of these two elements rather than their fusion was the chosen task of a certain number of critics and theorists. In the revolt against the tyranny of the rules, it was a natural and useful expedient to distinguish those rules dictated by the nature of an art, from those which had been formulated largely by custom. Johnson proposed such a distinction in an important paper in the Rambler, in 1751, and in doing so had many followers.[198] Among the earliest to justify such a position was Père André, for whom such a division in the rules was only a logical corollary of a more fundamental division in beauty itself, the object of the rules.[199] Diderot, besides summarizing André's system, bore testimony to its effectiveness in silencing the relativists.

> Que devient le système de Lucrèce et des Pyrrhoniens, dans le système du P. André? que rest-t-il d'abandonné à l'arbitraire? Presque rien; aussi pour toute réponse à l'objection de ceux qui prétendent que la beauté est d'éducation et de préjugé, il se contente de développer la source de

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[197] The Greek Theatre, pp. 146-47.

[198] Cf. the Rambler, No. 156, Sept. 14, 1751; and for subsequent use of the same idea, Gerard, pp. 185-86; J. Warton, I, 127; Beattie, Essays, etc., p. 3.

[199] Essai sur le beau, p. 27.

> leur erreur. Voici, dit-il, comment ils ont raisonné: ils ont cherché dans les meilleurs ouvrages des exemples de beau de caprice, et ils n'ont pas eu de peine à y en reccontrer, et a démontrer que le beau qu'on y reconnaissait était de caprice; ils ont pris des exemples du beau du gout, et ils ont très-bien démontré qu'il y avait aussi de l'arbitraire dans ce beau; et sans aller plus loin, ni s'apercevoir que leur énumération était incomplète, ils ont conclu que tout ce qu'on appelle beau, était arbitraire, et de caprice; mais on conçoit aisément que leur conclusion n'était juste que par rapport à la troisième branche du beau artificiel, et que leur raisonnement n'attaquait ni les deux autres branches de ce beau, ni le beau naturel, ni le beau essentiel.[200]

If beauty had indeed so many faces, obviously it was incumbent upon taste to perceive and relish them all impartially. Formey proclaimed this when he republished André's treatise in 1759, supplementing it with his own analysis of taste. Three years later, the Abbé Seran de la Tour borrowed André's terms as well as his ideas and treated specifically of three kinds of goût corresponding to André's principal divisions of le beau, "essentiel, naturel, et artificiel."[201] Nor were English readers entirely unacquainted with what they might have been expected to dismiss as French subtleties. A contributor to the London Magazine, in 1778, who proposed to clear up the current confusion about taste, having helped himself liberally to Formey's introduction, thus summarized André's definitions:

> There is an essential beautiful, independent of any institution, which is the eternal rule of the visible beauty of bodies. The slightest attention to our primitive ideas is sufficient to convince us, that regularity, order, proportion, and symmetry are essentially preferable to irregularity, disorder and disproportion. There is a natural beautiful dependent on the will of the Creator, but independent of our opinions and tastes. The essential beautiful, considered in the structure of bodies, is, as one may say,

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[200] Recherches, in Oeuvres, X, 19. For André's own account of the divisions of beauty, cf. his Essai sur le beau, pp. 34-36.

[201] For this summary of the L'Art de sentir et de juger en matière de goût (Paris, 1762), I am indebted, in the absence of the original, to T. M. Mustoxidi, Histoire de l'esthétique française (Paris, 1920), p. 39.

> nothing but the ground of the natural beautiful. . . . . There is a third kind of the beautiful, which we may call arbitrary or artificial. Such is the beauty of system or of manner in the practice of the arts; the beauty of mode or of custom in dress. . . . .[202]

Practically, more than one critic in the closing quarter of the century was confirmed in his uniformitarian position by accepting the arguments of the relativists and evaluating them in terms of the distinction between the natural and the conventional. Thus Reynolds, in 1776, exhorted his audience at the National Academy never to forget that "taste is regulated and formed by the presiding feelings of mankind." And yet he paid his respects to national differences also; for he went on:

> . . . . though eloquence has undoubtedly an essential and intrinsic excellence, and immovable principles common to all languages, and founded in the nature of our passions and affections, yet it has its ornaments and modes of address, which are merely arbitrary. What is approved in the eastern nations as grand and majestic would be considered by the Greeks and Romans as turgid and inflated; and they, in return, would be tho ght by the Orientals to express themselves in a cold and insipid manner.[203]

Omitting the trite examples, which we have already noted in Perrault, Beattie, Condillac, and Marmontel urged in much the same way that taste take account of both the uniform and the changeable elements of art.[204] Dugald Stewart, at the close of the period found place for the same distinction even in the associationist aesthetics.

> . . . . it is obvious that the circumstances which please, in the objects of Taste are of two kinds: First, those which are fitted to please by nature, or by associations which all mankind are led to form by their common condition; and Secondly, those which please in consequence of associations arising from local and accidental circumstances.

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[202] J.R., "Elements of Taste," London Magazine, XLVII (1778), 361.

[203] "Seventh Discourse," in Fifteen Discourses, p. 121.

[204] Beattie, Essay on Poetry and Music, pp. 5-6; Condillac, Cours d'études, II, 331; Marmontel, "Critique," in Eléments de littérature, I, 325; also his "Essai sur le goût," ibid., p. 20. Cf. in addition, J. Barry, Works, I, 406-7.

> Hence there are two kinds of Taste: the one enabling us to judge of those beauties which have a foundation in the human constitution; the other of such objects as derive their principal recommendation from the influence of fashion.[205]

But probably the most striking testimony to the invulnerable character of the uniformitarian standard when entrenched in this compromise, is the admission of Francis Jeffrey that writers, at least, ought really to have two tastes:

> . . . . the wisest course, perhaps, if it were only practicable, would be to have two tastes; one to enjoy, and one to work by; one founded upon universal associations, according to which they finished those performances for which they challenged universal praise, and another guided by all casual and individual associations through which they looked fondly upon nature, and upon the objects of their secret admiration.[206]

The grudging tone of this admission shows that Jeffrey had ceased to regard art as primarily communication. By exalting individual associations for their own sake, he professed in theory the widest relativism of taste, which because it disclaimed every norm of comparison, could not be discussed except in terms of autobiography. Thus he parted company with the relativists of the eighteenth century, even with Stewart, in spite of their common admiration of Alison's theory. These others could come to some sort of compromise with the uniformitarians, for they took their norm not from the lawless individual, but from some group, whether a nation, or an age, and the tendency which enabled them to recognize so much of a common bond made them hospitable to the notion of some universal norm as wide as the human species. Jeffrey, having locked the individual in the solitary cell of his own unique associations, could entertain no hope of agreement of tastes beyond the range of accidental coincidences of experience.

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[205] Elements, p. 375.

[206] "Essay on Beauty," Edinburgh Review, XVIII (1811), 46.

Nevertheless, in practice, even Jeffrey had to come back to the compromise of the eighteenth century and counsel the cult of "universal associations" as the price to be paid for "universal praise."